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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001018

SIPDIS

For R (Undersecretary Tutwiler); ECA (PHarrison);
IBB; NEA/PD (Mquinn, Pagnew); NEA (Tkrajeski)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: Meeting with information Minister and
National TV Chairman

1. (U) SUMMARY: On March 24, PAO held meetings with the Director of Yemen TV and the Minister of Information to brief them on upcoming media training programs sponsored by the Embassy and to discuss further cooperation in the information sector. Both interlocutors expressed readiness to work with the Public Diplomacy Section and presented a number of requests. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) In a meeting with Yemen TV Director Abdul Ghani Al-Shamiri, PAO John Balian proposed a number of programs to be acquired by State TV, such as "American Passages", "Democracy: A History of US" and others. PAO also told Mr. Shamiri that USAID Yemen may be able to acquire rights to "Sesame Street" in Arabic from Cairo and that program might be available to Yemen TV, if desired. Mr. Shamiri welcomed these offers, but insisted these were piecemeal propositions. Instead, he presented his own plan, which he said would cement the cooperative relationship between the US Mission and Yemen TV. His plan for cooperation (i.e. U.S. assistance) consists of three parts: a) Training/Preparation of Cadres; b) Programs; c) Equipment.

3. (U) Training: Mr. Shamiri asked that the Embassy provide Yemen TV with US television experts who could train his staff in all aspects of television broadcasting, including journalistic techniques, cameramanship, production, newscasting, documentary techniques and programming in general. He would also like to have the newsreaders of his budding English-language news program to get some training in the United States to improve their English and their delivery techniques. He said he lacks the cadres to implement real reforms at Yemen TV. If possible, he would also like to send a few promising young cadres to study broadcasting in the United States. Mr. Shamiri said he currently sends his workers to Syria to train at the broadcasting institute there, but that he is not satisfied with that training.

4. (U) Programs: Mr. Shamiri asked that we make available to Yemen TV some commercial American TV programs that illustrate law enforcement and the rule of law. He specifically mentioned the Reality-TV show "Police" and "Law and Order" as well as other reality shows that present an unvarnished picture of one aspect of life in America. He said these would be very popular in Yemen and would raise the people's esteem of the United States. He also asked that we provide English language instruction videotape series so he could start a TV-based English teaching program. Additionally, Mr. Shamiri would like to have scientific and nature related programs produced in the United States.

5. (U) Equipment: Mr. Shamiri would like the Embassy to donate two digicam or betacam cameras (or one of each) to Yemen TV to be devoted, he said, to covering U.S. sponsored activities in Yemen and the shooting of documentary programs on U.S. projects in the country. He would also like us to provide Yemen TV with state of the art editing equipment (together with training on how to use them). He would also like Worldnet to replace the satellite dish (provided by Worldnet) that is now out of commission and the accompanying decoder so he may resume pulling down programming for broadcast. Mr. Shamiri said the French Embassy had provided Yemen TV with equipment to cover French projects in Yemen as well as to teach French on TV. He said that as a consequence, he had opened a "French" office at Yemen TV that would deal exclusively with French programming. He said the Germans are now sponsoring several of

his workers for training in Germany. And he said other foreign representations have also approached him with offers of assistance.

16. (U) Comment: Television is the most important medium in Yemen and Mr. Shamiri's proposed cooperation would give us unprecedented access to that medium. Mr. Shamiri's request for equipment and access to programs would only cost an estimated 250 to 300 thousand dollars, a small sum by any standards for what the Mission would get in return. Post does not have the funds to cover these costs. Given Washington's interest in the electronic media, we are requesting that additional resources be tapped to take advantage of this window of opportunity. Mr. Shamiri's request for training could be handled through existing exchange programs (special IVPs and Speakers).

17. (U) Meeting with Information Minister: Prior to the meeting with the Director of National TV, PAO John Balian met with Minister of Information Hussein Al-Awadhi (an alumnus of U.S. educational exchange programs) to inform him of upcoming media training programs sponsored by the Embassy. Mr. Awadhi appreciated the efforts of the Public Diplomacy Section to organize a media-training workshop in mid-May and a radio production workshop in mid-July. In turn, he asked for U.S. assistance for some projects his Ministry is contemplating.

18. (U) Regional FM Radio Stations: The Minister said the government wants to establish small FM radio stations in some regions of the country. He said the government has already allocated the necessary funds but need our assistance in finding suppliers for the needed equipment in the United States and a U.S. expert to advise them on the setup of the radio stations. He asked if we could finance the trip of such an expert to Yemen.

19. (U) A Radio Museum: Mr. Awadhi also said he wants to convert a building next to the Ministry's main building into a "Radio Museum". He said the first centerpiece of the proposed museum will be the equipment that was used at the very start of radio broadcasts in Yemen in 1940. He said the equipment was donated by the United States and he feels the United States should participate in the setup of the museum in light of this fact. Therefore, he would like some financial assistance as well as technical advice on how to set up the museum properly.

10. (U) Training for TV Announcers/Hosts: Additionally, the Minister would like us help him send some promising TV announcers and program hosts to improve their presentation skills. He would like them to get hands on training on how best to read the news, how to conduct talk shows, how to organize roundtable discussions, and so on. He would also like to see some working journalists sent to the United States for advanced studies in journalism.

11. (U) Comment: The Minister's request for assistance with the proposed FM stations could be easily met. AID has experience with community radio stations and local broadcasting and knows experts who have set up such programs. AID could also help in identifying U.S. equipment suppliers. The Minister's request for training could also be handled through existing exchange programs with some more funding. Post is not so enthusiastic about the proposed museum project.

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